

# Sunnah and the People of Sunnah

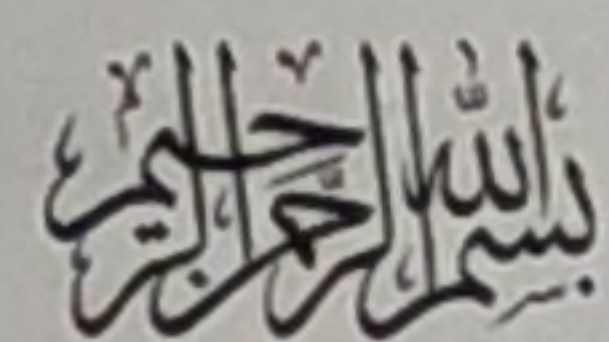
Shaykh Mawlānā Muhammad  
Saleem Dhorat ḥafīẓahullāh



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## Foreword

The salvation of every individual in the Hereafter depends upon adopting the Faith of Islam. However, Shayṭān has obfuscated the path leading towards salvation and Paradise by giving rise to many deviated sects. Of the 73 sects that have been predicted in this Ummah, only one group will head towards Paradise, whilst the balance will be destined to Hellfire. To identify and align oneself with this group – known as Ahl-as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah – is the greatest success of every Believer.

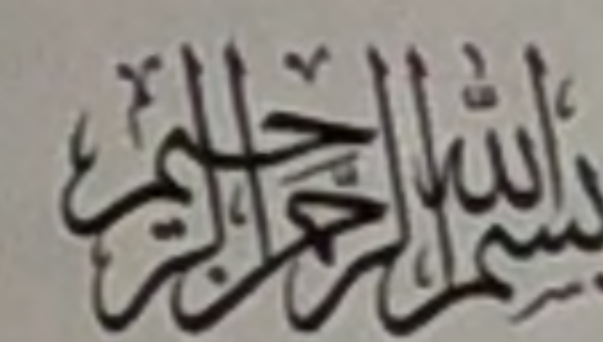
In this concise and beneficial book, Shaykh Mawlānā Muhammad Saleem Dhorat of Leicester has defined in simple words who this group is, how to recognise it and who the learned scholars of this group are. He has also dispelled some of the misconceptions spread about this group.

In these latter days, Muslim youth with scant Islamic education are extremely vulnerable to corrupt influences. They are in great danger of not recognising the 'authentic' Islam – the Islam followed by Ahl-as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah. It is a blessing on the Ummah that our learned scholars strive hard to educate their congregations about these vital matters. May Allāh ﷻ crown this work and all the other admirable efforts of the respected Shaykh with success and Divine Acceptance.

(Muftī) Zubair Bayat

South Africa

21 September 2001



الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَحْدَهُ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى مَنْ لَا نَبِيَّ بَعْدَهُ ، أَمَّا بَعْدُ  
فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ:  
... إِنَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ تَفَرَّقَتْ عَلَى ثِنْتَيْنِ وَ سَبْعِينَ مِلَّةً ،  
وَتَفْتَرِقُ أُمَّتِي عَلَى ثَلَاثٍ وَ سَبْعِينَ مِلَّةً ، كُلُّهُمْ فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا مِلَّةً وَاحِدَةً .  
قَالُوا : وَمَنْ هِيَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ؟ قَالَ : مَا أَنَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَصْحَابِي .

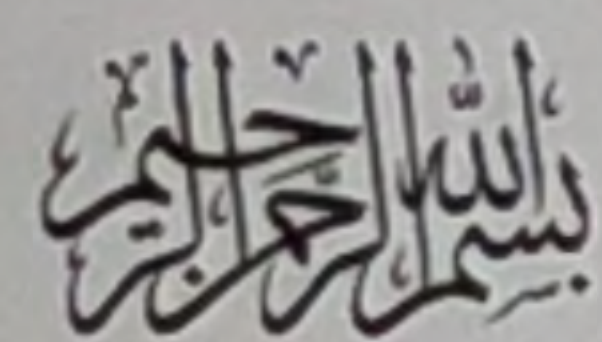
The Prophet ﷺ has said:

The children of Israel were divided in 72 sects. My Ummah shall split into 73 sects, all of which, save one, will go to Jahannam. The Ṣaḥābah ﷺ asked, "Which group is that?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "(It is that group which follows) that (path) on which I and my Ṣaḥābah are." (Tirmidhī)

The Prophet ﷺ, in the above-mentioned Ḥadīth, has predicted the division of this Ummah into 73 sects, each of which is destined for Jahannam save one. And further on, he also goes to identify the one group, which would not deviate like the rest.

It is surprising to note that the present-day Ummah is, as foretold by the Prophet ﷺ, split into numerous groups and sects, and the number is still on the increase. Each of these sects claims to be on the right path, yet, as we learn from the Ḥadīth, only one of these will actually be on the right path. Which is the right group from among these, is a question which is as significant as it is interesting, yet the answer is





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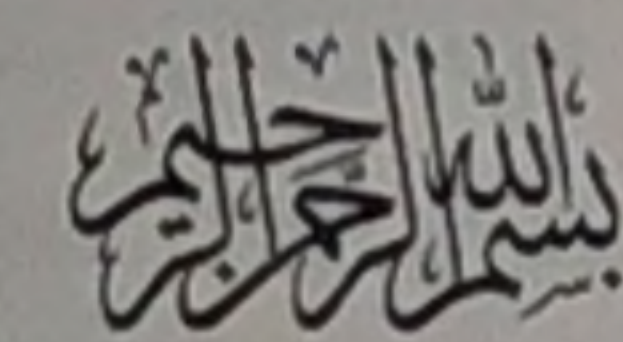
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found in the very Ḥadīth quoted above. The Prophet ﷺ has himself identified the faithful and upright people through the words,

مَا أَنَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَصْحَابِي

(It is that group which follows) that (path) on which I and my Ṣaḥābah are.

Adherence to the **Sunnah** of the Prophet ﷺ and the **Jamā'ah** (group) of Ṣaḥābah ؓ is the distinguishing mark and feature of such people who will attain salvation. Those who fail to meet the above criterion will invariably be consigned to Jahannam. Having understood that adherence to the Sunnah and affiliation with the group of Ṣaḥābah ؓ is the key to success, it would be important for us to understand what these words really stand for. Only then will we realise whether we fall within the specified category treading the right path or are forming part of the deviant sects also highlighted in the Ḥadīth. Below we attempt to elaborate on the two terms; Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ and the Jamā'ah of the Ṣaḥābah ؓ.

## Definition of the Sunnah

The definition of Sunnah is:

قَوْلُ الرَّسُولِ وَفِعْلُهُ وَتَقْرِيرُهُ

The statement of Rasūl ﷺ, his practice and verification.

Verification implies his tacit approval, i.e., upon observing someone doing something, the Prophet ﷺ did not object to it, but remained silent. His silence has been equalled to his explicit

approval, as it cannot be expected of him to remain silent at things disapproved by the Shari'ah. Hence, it would follow that whatever the Prophet ﷺ had said is Sunnah, whatever he had done is Sunnah and whatever he had verified through his silence will also be classified as Sunnah.

## Definition of the Jamā'ah

'Jamā'ah' means 'the group', which refers to the Ṣaḥābah ؓ. Being the direct students of the Prophet ﷺ, they were the ones most worthy and capable of interpreting the noble sayings of the Prophet ﷺ. It then becomes binding on us to draw on their works and explanations for the correct understanding of the Aḥādīth, and not study the Aḥādīth independently and draw our own conclusions therefrom. The Ṣaḥābah ؓ were the direct addressees of the Qur'ān and also the direct recipients of the Aḥādīth. It was they who had observed the Prophet ﷺ first hand and were fully aware of the context of his statements. They were the noblest and most pious of people after the Prophets of Allāh ﷺ, and were furthest from the evils of Shayṭān and the ego. These noble personalities transmitted every detail of the life and Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ and left no stone unturned in presenting a sound image of every aspect of his person and lifestyle. It would then be logical and wise to rely on their interpretations and give preference to their explanations over ours. Having been defined and specified in the above Ḥadīth, adherence to the Sunnah and the Ṣaḥābah is the only way to salvation, and all other options will have to be rejected.



## Ahl-as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah

Those who adhere to the above are known as the Ahl-as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah. Many modern-day youths, upon hearing fancy titles, such as, Ahl-al-Ḥadīth, become the victims of an inferiority complex. They begin to think, 'Oh, they are the followers of Ḥadīth whilst we aren't.' Such thoughts, however, are based purely on ignorance.

Alḥamdulillāh, we follow the Ḥadīth more than anybody else, as can be understood from the title, 'Ahl-as-Sunnah', which is only an alternative of 'Ahl-al-Ḥadīth'. We have the honour of following the Aḥādīth of Rasūlullāh ﷺ in every aspect of Dīn. We, the Ahl-as-Sunnah, believe strongly that the path leading to Allāh ﷻ can never be a path that diverges from the Sunnah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ.

Rasūlullāh ﷺ has laid great emphasis on following his Sunnah. He, for instance, said,

تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمْ أَمْرَيْنِ لَنْ تَضِلُّوا مَا تَمَسَّكْتُم بِهِمَا: كِتَابَ اللَّهِ، وَسُنَّةَ نَبِيِّهِ

I have left amongst you two things, which if you hold fast to, you will never go astray; the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of His Prophet. (Mu'aṭṭā Imām Mālik)

The Ḥadīth predicting the division of the Ummah (mentioned at the beginning) also explains the significance of Sunnah. And the statement of the Prophet ﷺ (the path on which I and my Ṣaḥābah are) is general in that it encompasses all aspects of Dīn. This, then, explains that in the Sight of Allāh ﷻ, any ideology, way of life, or action that does not conform to the path shown by the Prophet ﷺ and the Ṣaḥābah ﷺ, will be

invariably rejected, as such paths do not fulfil the criteria of being rightly guided and Divinely protected. Similarly, a path that digresses from the path of the Ṣaḥābah ﷺ will also fall outside the Sunnah category, as is indicated by the above Ḥadīth. The Ṣaḥābah ﷺ were not a people who would ever do a thing that was at variance with the Sunnah. And how can that be expected of a people who were described by the Prophet ﷺ, as 'guiding stars'. (Bayhaqī)

This is the distinguishing sign of the Ahl-as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah, for they are the only people who accept the Ṣaḥābah ﷺ as sole authorities on Islam (after the Prophet ﷺ) and cast aside any opinion, reason and logic that is in conflict with their collective interpretation and understanding.

## An Example: Twenty Raka'āt Tarāwīḥ

The example of twenty raka'āt tarāwīḥ can be cited here for the sake of explanation. 'Umar Fārūq ﷺ, during his period of khilāfah, once gathered the Ṣaḥābah ﷺ, and ordered 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b ﷺ to lead the tarāwīḥ ṣalāh in congregation. None from amongst the Ṣaḥābah disagreed with this edict, rather, they, unanimously and unquestioningly, joined the congregation.

This, apparently, was something new which 'Umar ﷺ had initiated, as tarāwīḥ with congregation was not a practice during the time of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. Nevertheless, in view of the beliefs of the Ahl-as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah, this act of 'Umar ﷺ was not at all against the Sunnah, rather it was in total agreement with it. The unanimity of the Ṣaḥābah ﷺ in the acceptance of this initiative of 'Umar ﷺ, is a great evidence to this. If such



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is the attitude of the Ṣaḥābah ؓ with regard to the opinions of other Ṣaḥābah, then common people like ourselves have no ground whatsoever to raise objections against the opinions of these noble personalities. We have to understand that whatever a Companion does, has to be in the light of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, irrespective of whether we understand it or not. And the status of the four Khulafā is distinguished among all the other Ṣaḥābah ؓ. The Prophet ﷺ has said,

فَعَلَيْكُمْ بِسُنَّتِيْ وَ سُنَّةِ الْخُلَفَاءِ الرَّاشِدِيْنَ الْمُهَدِّيْنَ

Hold fast to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly guided Khulafā. (Tirmidhī)

### Remarkable Answer of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ

Once, Imām Abū Yūsuf ؓ, a muḥaddith, faqīh and one of the closest students of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ, asked the great Imām, 'Did 'Umar ؓ receive any instruction from Rasūlullāh ﷺ regarding the twenty raka'āt tarāwīḥ?' The great Imām replied, 'Umar ؓ was not someone who would innovate something (i.e. he must have had some evidence.)'

This was the position and honour Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ gave 'Umar ؓ, a Ṣaḥābī of the Prophet ﷺ. As is evident from his reply, he did not disregard the opinion of 'Umar ؓ only because he (Imām Abū Ḥanīfah) could not find any Ḥadīth endorsing it.

### Present-day Misconceptions

It is indeed distressing to see that Muslim youths of today, when confronted with objections directed by members of various sects, become very confused. They, due to lack of knowledge of Dīn, are unable to defend themselves when questions are raised against the position and stance of themselves and their 'ulamā. The deficiency in Dīnī knowledge owes greatly to the carelessness and neglect found in such individuals in Dīnī matters. The youths of today consider that they know what there is to know for a common Muslim. Having left madrasah in their teens, these youngsters never bothered to acquire any further knowledge; neither did they keep any contact with the 'ulamā; sat in their company nor read books written by them. This illiteracy in Dīnī matters can prove to be very dangerous and can lead to confusion and ultimate deviance, especially when confronted by members of those deviant sects who are out preying on such uneducated youths.

Such people go about trying to instil an inferiority complex within modern-day youths, through various means. One particular method is to convince them of the incompetence of their 'ulamā. With respect to the 'ulamā of the Indian sub-continent, in particular, they are usually heard as saying that because they are not Arabs, they fail to understand the true essence of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

Unfortunately what they fail to realise is that a person does not necessarily have to be an Arab to understand the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Many great personalities throughout Islamic History, who are acknowledged as luminaries of the Muslim Ummah



in Ḥadīth, tafsīr, fiqh, etc., were not Arabs. Similarly, being an Arab does not necessarily mean that such a person would automatically understand the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. In order to understand these sources of Sharī'ah, one has to study certain sciences, irrespective of whether one is an Arab or a non-Arab. If an Arab has not studied these sciences, he will not have the authority to interpret the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, whereas if a non-Arab has studied these sciences, he will be in a position to do so. Many great scholars, the likes of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Bukhārī ۞, were non-Arabs. A whole list can be compiled if we were to enumerate the names of such scholars, but we will suffice by mentioning only some of the scholars of the Indian sub-continent, as they are the ones usually targeted.

### **Shaykh-al-Ḥadīth, Shaykh Mawlānā Muḥammad Zakariyyā ۞**

Shaykh-al-Ḥadīth, Shaykh Mawlānā Muḥammad Zakariyyā ۞ lectured on Ṣaḥīḥ-al-Bukhārī for 41 years. His efforts in the field of Ḥadīth are known to all. He is accepted as a great authority in the field of Ḥadīth by the whole Islamic world. His works include 'Lāmi'-ad-Darārī' and 'Kanz-al-Mutawārī', two commentaries on Ṣaḥīḥ-al-Bukhārī, 'Al-Kawkab Ad-Durri', commentary on Jāmi'-at-Tirmidhī, and 'Awjaz-al-Masālik', the commentary on Mu'aṭṭā Imām Mālik ۞. These commentaries were applauded and recognised by all the well known 'ulamā from throughout the world and are used as reference books by both the Arab and the non-Arab 'ulamā.

### **Shaykh 'Allāmah Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī ۞**

Shaykh 'Allāmah Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī ۞, another great scholar of the Indian sub-continent, is the author of 'Fatḥ-al-Mulhim', a commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim in Arabic, accepted by both Arabs and non-Arabs. The Shaykh, however, could not complete the commentary due to his early demise. Fortunately, another scholar of the Indian sub-continent, Shaykh Muftī Muḥammad Taqī 'Uthmānī ḥafīzahullāh, aptly and competently completed it.

### **Shaykh Mawlānā Muḥammad Yūsuf Binnorī ۞**

Shaykh Mawlānā Muḥammad Yūsuf Binnorī ۞ has authored 'Ma'ārif-as-Sunan' - a commentary on Jāmi'-at-Tirmidhī - accepted by all.

### **Shaykh Mawlānā Zafar Aḥmad Thānwī ۞**

The respected Shaykh is the author of 'I'lā-as-Sunan', a 22 volume work, which has been accepted throughout the world.

### **Shaykh Mawlānā Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī ۞**

Shaykh Mawlānā Khalīl Aḥmad authored 'Badhl-al-Majhūd' (in 20 Volumes), which is a famous commentary of Sunan Abū Dāwūd.

These are but a few examples. What I would like to emphasise is that we, on account of our illiteracy, should not become the victims of an inferiority complex. If we hear something, which is contrary to what we believe or follow, we should refer to the 'ulamā and seek answers to our queries from them.



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### **Shaykh 'Allāmah Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī ۞**

Shaykh 'Allāmah Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī ۞, another great scholar of the Indian sub-continent, is the author of 'Fatḥ-al-Mulhim', a commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim in Arabic, accepted by both Arabs and non-Arabs. The Shaykh, however, could not complete the commentary due to his early demise. Fortunately, another scholar of the Indian sub-continent, Shaykh Muftī Muḥammad Taqī 'Uthmānī ḥafīzahullāh, aptly and competently completed it.

### **Shaykh Mawlānā Muḥammad Yūsuf Binnorī ۞**

Shaykh Mawlānā Muḥammad Yūsuf Binnorī ۞ has authored 'Ma'ārif-as-Sunan' – a commentary on Jāmi'-at-Tirmidhī – accepted by all.

### **Shaykh Mawlānā Zafar Aḥmad Thānwī ۞**

The respected Shaykh is the author of 'I'lā-as-Sunan', a 22 volume work, which has been accepted throughout the world.

### **Shaykh Mawlānā Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī ۞**

Shaykh Mawlānā Khalīl Aḥmad authored 'Badhl-al-Majhūd' (in 20 Volumes), which is a famous commentary of Sunan Abū Dāwūd.

These are but a few examples. What I would like to emphasise is that we, on account of our illiteracy, should not become the victims of an inferiority complex. If we hear something, which is contrary to what we believe or follow, we should refer to the 'ulamā and seek answers to our queries from them.



## Reality of Following One of the Four Great Imāms

There are four great Imāms, namely, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Mālik, Imām Shāfi'ī and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥambal ؒ. Ninety-nine per cent of the Ummah follow the teachings of one of these four Imāms. The minority that is opposed to such following, usually try to mislead by stating that by following an Imām, one leaves aside the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ, and it is him that we are required to follow and not any Imām. The objection is, however, unfounded and indicates lack of knowledge on the part of those raising it.

This is because when we say we follow an Imām, we simply mean that we follow the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth under their guidance. They are followed because the Ummah unanimously agrees that their works are in total harmony with the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. One who follows any of the four Imāms is, in reality, following the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, as every ruling of these great luminaries is in accordance with the Aḥādīth of the Prophet ﷺ.

How can a Muslim even contemplate abandoning the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth? Such a person would no longer remain a Muslim. The teachings of the four great Imāms are followed because they are based on none other than the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Besides, how can following of an Imām be against the Sunnah when we see that even the high ranking scholars of the Ummah followed an Imām and refrained from interpreting the Shar'ī sources themselves.

## Following an Imām is Following the Qur'ān & Aḥādīth

As it is impractical for every single individual to undertake an in-depth study of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and dedicate him/herself totally towards this cause, without engaging in any other activity, it becomes necessary to follow those who had dedicated their entire lives in studying the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and proved their competency and capability in interpreting them. It was as if Allāh ﷻ Himself had chosen them for this noble work. The science of Ḥadīth, tafsīr and fiqh is so vast that if they had not committed themselves to studying these, we may have not been able to follow the Dīn in its entirety. There are many Aḥādīth which apparently contradict one another; how would it have been possible to understand and follow them?

Many people who, having made an attempt to study the books of Ḥadīth directly, without any scholarly knowledge, were led astray due to their not comprehending the real essence of the Ḥadīth. Such people first doubted the authenticity of the Aḥādīth and then ultimately rejected them. Hence, following the Imāms is a means of safeguarding oneself from such deviation. I repeat, when we say we follow an Imām, this means we follow the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth under his guidance.

## The Great Imām

It is usually the great personality of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؒ who becomes the target of many criticisms. Fingers are raised at the lack of knowledge of the one who was an ocean of knowledge. It is an accepted fact that the great Imām had the honour of



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meeting Ṣaḥābah and benefiting directly from them. He was one of the closest to the time of the Prophet ﷺ from amongst the great fuqahā and muḥaddithīn. Pious scholars of the Ummah unanimously accept him as a great faqīh and mujtahid, and until today quote his opinions in their books with great respect and honour.

### Opinions of the Three Imāms

Let us glance through the opinions of the three Imāms concerning the great Imām:

**Imām Mālik** ؓ: "In the field of fiqh he (Abū Ḥanīfah) has been bestowed with such Divine Guidance that he did not have to make much effort to achieve it."

**Imām Shāfi'ī** ؓ: "The person who wishes to excel in fiqh is bound to be in need of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ is one of the personalities who was guided with fiqh by Allāh ؓ."

"The people are all children (dependants) of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ in the field of fiqh."

"I haven't seen a greater faqīh (jurist) than Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ."

**Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥambal** ؓ: "Subḥānallāh! In matters of knowledge, piety, abstinence from dunyā (worldly gains) and preference of the Hereafter, he occupied the highest status."

### Opinions of Other Great Scholars

Let us also study the statements of other world-renowned luminaries who are accepted as authorities in Ḥadīth and fiqh by the whole Muslim Ummah.

**Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah** ؓ: "I have not seen anyone like Abū Ḥanīfah."

"The man who taught me Ḥadīth and turned me into a muḥaddith was Abū Ḥanīfah."

**'Abdullāh ibn Mubārak** ؓ: "Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ was the most eminent of all jurists. I haven't seen anyone as skilled as him in the field of fiqh (jurisprudence)."

"If we do not come across any explicit text of Rasūlullāh ﷺ or of the Ṣaḥābah ؓ on any religious issue, then, according to us the opinion of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ is just like the Ḥadīth of Rasūlullāh ﷺ (as it would never contradict the Sunnah)."

**Sufyān Thawrī** ؓ: "(Abū Ḥanīfah) is the greatest faqīh (jurist) on the surface of the earth."

"In the presence of Abū Ḥanīfah, we were like (ordinary) birds in front of a falcon. And indeed he was the leader of the scholars."

**Imām Awzā'ī** ؓ: "I envy Imām Abū Ḥanīfah over his extensive knowledge and remarkable intelligence."

**Fuḍayl ibn Iyād** ؓ: "Abū Ḥanīfah was a great jurist. He was renowned for his fiqh and piety."



**Wakī' ibn Jarrāh** ؓ: "I haven't witnessed a faqīh nor a person performing Ṣalāh as perfectly as Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ."

**Yahyā ibn Ma'īn** ؓ: "Abū Ḥanīfah was a very reliable narrator. I haven't heard any of the muḥaddithīn commenting negatively regarding his reliability."

**Naḍr ibn Shumayl** ؓ: "People were sleeping in the field of fiqh until Abū Ḥanīfah came and woke them up."

### Students of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ

Imām Muḥammad and Imām Abū Yūsuf ؓ, are the most well known students of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ. These were the two scholars through whom the knowledge of the great Imām spread throughout the world. Others include Imām Zūfar ؓ, Imām 'Abdur Razzāq ؓ, 'Abdullāh ibn Mubārak ؓ, Yahyā ibn Zakariyyā ؓ, Yahyā ibn Sa'īd Qaṭṭān ؓ, Imām Wakī' ؓ, Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah ؓ, Ḥafs ibn Ghiyāth Nakha'ī al-Kūfī ؓ, Yazīd ibn Hārūn ؓ and many more.

### Students of the Great Imām's Students

**Imām Bukhārī** ؓ: The most prominent figure in Ḥadīth, Imām Bukhārī ؓ is the student of Imām Zūfar ؓ, who is the student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ, and he is also the student of Imām Aḥmad ؓ and Yahyā ibn Ma'īn ؓ, who are the students of the great Imām's students.

**Imām Muslim** ؓ: This great muḥaddith is the student of Imām Zūfar ؓ, who is the student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ.

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**Imām Abū Dāwūd** ؓ: He is the student of Imām Zūfar ؓ, who is the student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ. Ibn Abī Shaybah ؓ, the student of the Imām's student, is also his teacher.

**Imām Nasa'ī** ؓ: He is the student of Ishāq ibn Rāhwayh ؓ and Ibn Abī Shaybah ؓ, who are both students of the great Imām's students.

**Imām ibn Mājah** ؓ: He is the student of Ibn Abī Shaybah ؓ, the student of the great Imām's student.

**Imām Tirmidhī** ؓ: He is the student of Imām Bukhārī ؓ, Imām Muslim ؓ and Imām Abū Dāwūd ؓ, who are either the students of the great Imām's students, or even further, the students of his students' students.

**Imām Shāfi'ī** ؓ: Imām Shāfi'ī ؓ is the student of Imām Muḥammad ؓ (a prominent student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ). He (Imām Shāfi'ī ؓ) had travelled to Baghdad and stayed for many months in the company of Imām Muḥammad ؓ. His comments regarding Imām Muḥammad were:

حَمَلْتُ عَنْ مُحَمَّدٍ حِمْلَ بُخْتِيْ

I have acquired from Muḥammad ؓ a camel-load of knowledge.



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The amount of knowledge, which he had acquired from Imām Muḥammad رحمته, according to his above statement, was not minimal, i.e., just a few Aḥādīth or so, rather, it was so much that if he were to put it down on paper, then the books would require a camel to carry the load.

If there was any weakness in Imām Muḥammad رحمته, why would a faqīh and muḥaddith of the calibre of Imām Shafi'ī رحمته spend so much time in the company of the latter. Why did Imām Shafi'ī رحمته acknowledge the authority of Imām Muḥammad رحمته even when he later became a prominent authority in fiqh and Ḥadīth himself. Isn't this something worth reflecting over?

**Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥambal:** Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥambal رحمته, another great muḥaddith and faqīh, is the compiler of a collection of Ḥadīth – 'Musnad-Aḥmad (Ibn Ḥambal)' – (a widely accepted compilation that is regarded as an authentic reference book). He was the student of Imām Abū Yūsuf رحمته, who was the student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته. Again, If there had been any deficiency in the knowledge of Imām Abū Yūsuf رحمته, how could Imām Aḥmad – an undisputed authority in Ḥadīth – be expected to stay in his company and acquire knowledge?

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## Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته - Muḥaddith & His Work

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته, as well as being a renowned faqīh, was a great muḥaddith too. He has a compilation on Ḥadīth, known as 'Musnad-al-Imām Abī Ḥanīfah.' This compilation has various versions to it, which were a result of the many students of his narrating individually from the Imām. Imām Abu-al-Mu'ayyid Al-Khwarzamī رحمته (D. 665 AH), undertook the task of compiling all these works in a single book, which was named, 'Jāmi'-al-Masānīd lil-Imām Abī Ḥanīfah.' Despite such a large collection of Aḥādīth narrated by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته, there still remains a doubt amongst some people as to whether Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته was a muḥaddith or not. Only Allāh سبحانه would know the reason why such people harbour enmity against the Imām.

## Imām Abū Ḥanīfah's Compilation of Ḥadīth

Shaykh Sayyid Muḥammad Murtaḍā Zabīdī رحمته undertook a research on the Masānīd of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته and compared the Aḥādīth here with those contained in the six most authentic books of Aḥādīth, namely, Saḥīḥ-al-Bukhārī, Saḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan Abū Dāwūd, Jāmi'-at-Tirmidhī, Sunan Nasa'ī and Sunan Ibn Mājah. He then collected all those that corresponded to the Aḥādīth in the six books and compiled a new book entitled, 'Uqūd-al-Jawāhir-al-Munīfah.' This work alone is a great proof indicating how great a muḥaddith the Imām was.



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## Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ - A Tābi'i

Another important point worth mentioning here is that Imām Bukhārī & Imām Muslim ؓ, being the students of the students of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ, appeared much later. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ was a tābi'i, who had seen the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. Moreover, amongst the well known leading fuqahā and muḥaddithīn, such as Imām Mālik, Imām Shāfi'i, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥambal, Imām Bukhārī, Imām Muslim ؓ, only Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ enjoys this honour.

It is indeed surprising to discover that somebody like Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ, who is not only a leading scholar and muḥaddith, but a genius in these fields, and the teacher of numerous renowned jurists as well as being one benefiting directly from the Ṣaḥābah ؓ, could be referred to as incompetent in Ḥadīth. In addition, how would it be possible for someone to deduce so many thousands of rulings of fiqh without the knowledge of Ḥadīth?

## Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ - The Greatest Faqīh

The extensive work carried out by the great Imām in the field of fiqh is recognised by all. All the fuqahā undisputedly consider him to be the leader in the field of fiqh. In the list of the fuqahā, the name of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ stands out as prominently as the moon among the stars. In comparison with the great Imām, every other faqīh seems a child. There could be no better expression than what was said by Imām Shāfi'i ؓ regarding the great Imām. He said:

## النَّاسُ عِيَالُ أَبِي حَنِيفَةَ فِي الْفِقْهِ

All the fuqahā are children of Abū Ḥanīfah in fiqh.

Is this not ample testimony to the high status of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah?

Another factor that goes to signify the great position of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ is the fact that all the great scholars of the Ummah acknowledge the high status of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ in the field of Ḥadīth, fiqh and piety, many of whom were followers of his teachings. Why would they have followed him if his knowledge of Ḥadīth had been inadequate? And it is not that these people were not observant of the Sunnah. They were the ones most particular with regard to the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. How can it be expected of a people who endeavoured to practise even the most insignificant of the Sunnah acts, which were not even obligatory, that they would perform Ṣalāh in a manner that was contrary to the Sunnah.

As for those who profess to follow Ḥadīth directly, how can we even consider following them when they do not feel the need to rely on those accepted as authorities by the whole Ummah. Many of them go beyond and degrade Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ؓ and other fuqahā and Imāms, and raise criticisms against them. In spite of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah's apparent status and evident scholarship, they insist that he had limited knowledge and understanding of Ḥadīth, and, therefore, does not even deserve to be called an 'ālim, let alone a mujtahid and muḥaddith. How can we even consider listening to such disrespectful people? How can we listen to their arguments, when according to them 99% of the Ummah, the followers of the four Imāms, including



many thousands of eminent scholars, were all innovators and therefore deviant. We thank Allāh ﷻ, Who has blessed us with the tawfīq to be among those who follow the Sunnah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, in the light of the teachings of the great Imāms, as there can be no one more close to the Sunnah than them, for they rely solely on the luminaries of the 'khayr-al-qurūn' (best of eras) for the interpretation of the Shar'ī sources, whilst others rely on their own understanding.

### Priorities Need to be Set

It is highly regrettable to realise how these people can go around rousing disputes among the Muslim Ummah. They should know that their baseless arguments do nothing but breed controversy and create more confusion amongst Muslims, especially the Western youths, many of whom can only be described as being on the verge of Islam. There are so many other important issues affecting Muslim youths, which need to be tackled more urgently, e.g. drugs, etc. However, these important issues are left aside and irrelevant matters are put at the forefront of discussions. These people do not have any objective as far as the progress of Islam is concerned. If they did, they would not be engaged in discussing petty issues like these. Those people who have concern for the well being of the Ummah worry about the major issues that are affecting the Ummah. May Allāh ﷻ give us all the tawfīq to practise His Dīn in accordance with His Wishes, and cause us all to unite on Haqq as an Ummah. Āmīn.

وَأَخِرُ دَعْوَانَا أَنْ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ



The children of Israel were divided in 72 sects. My Ummah shall split into 73 sects, all of which, save one, will go to Jahannam. The Ṣaḥābah ﷺ asked, "Which group is that?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "(It is that group which follows) that (path) on which I and my Ṣaḥābah are." (Tirmidhī)

In these latter days, Muslim Youth with scant Islamic education are extremely vulnerable to corrupt influences. They are in great danger of not recognising the 'authentic' Islam – the Islam followed by Ahl-as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah.

In this concise and beneficial book, the renowned Islamic scholar and spiritual mentor Shaykh-al-Ḥadīth, Shaykh Mawlānā Muḥammad Saleem Dhorat *ḥa fīzahullāh* has defined in simple words how to recognise this group and who the learned scholars of this group are. The Shaykh has also dispelled some of the misconceptions spread about this group.